

Teen Dating Violence

What Parents & Teachers need to know • Tips for Parents & Teachers

Teenagers often experience abuse and violence in dating relationships. In dating violence, one partner tries to maintain power and control over the other through abusive actions. Statistics show that 1 in 3 teenagers have experienced or will experience violence in a dating relationship. Forty percent of teenage girls ages 14 to 17 say they know someone their age that has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend. Dating violence can happen at any age and to either gender. It can also occur in all cultures and at any socioeconomic level.

Teen dating violence is often hidden for many reasons. One reason is teens may not realize they are in an abusive situation because they are inexperienced with dating relationships. Another reason is that often times teenagers do not know how to communicate the abuse to their parents and/or teachers. If a teen discloses, it is often to a trusted friend.

WARNING SIGNS a teen may be experiencing dating violence:

- Physical signs of injury such as bruises, scratches or other injuries
- Falling grades, dropping out of school activities or school
- Fear of attending school
- Avoids friends/isolating behaviors
- Sudden changes in mood or personality, being anxious or depressed, acting out, being secretive or afraid
- Sudden changes in clothes or make-up
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Difficulty in making decisions and having confidence in his/her choices
- Constantly thinking about his/her boyfriend/girlfriend
- Behaves differently around his/her boyfriend/girlfriend
- Spends an excessive amount of time with his/her boyfriend/girlfriend
- Makes excuses or apologizes for his/her boyfriend/girlfriend's behavior
- Pregnancy

WARNING SIGNS a teen may become violent/abusive:

- Quick to get involved in a dating relationship
- Constantly call, text, e-mail or send instant messages (including abusing Facebook or MySpace)
- Verbally abusive, calls his/her partner names and criticizes his/her partner frequently
- Does not care about his/her partner's feelings and will not take "no" for an answer
- Controlling or bossy behavior
- Believes in rigid sex roles and gender expectations
- Demands to know where his/her partner is and who he/she is with at all times
- Extremely jealous
- Isolates his/her partner from friends and family or from the things he/she enjoys doing

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- Behaves selfishly
- Has explosive anger or displays unpredictable mood swings
- Threatens violence
- Cruel to animals or bullies other kids
- Uses force during an argument
- Uses force, intimidation or threatens his/her partner to engage in sexual activity
- Blames his/her partner for their negative behavior or for what is wrong
- Makes false promises
- Uses alcohol or drugs
- Has a history of unhealthy relationships
- Makes his/her partner afraid to end the relationship
- Does not respect his/her partner's privacy or property

If you suspect a teen may be involved in an abusive dating relationship, it is important to start the dialogue with the teen. Do not be upset if the teen feels more comfortable talking with a relative, trusted family friend, teacher or counselor. It is important how you respond to help him/her feel safe, be safe and start the healing process. Remain calm, avoid being judgmental, never blame the teen and listen.

For more information about teen dating violence or where to go for help:

Sandra Bankston, L.C.S.W.
Victim/Witness Counselor
123 N. O'Plaine Road
Gurnee, IL 60031
Lake County Children's Advocacy Center
sbankston@lakecountyil.gov

Erin Brzezinski
*Recent Western Illinois University
College Graduate*
Order of Protection (D100) Intern
em-brzezinski@wiu.edu

Melissa Burke
Felony Review Division
Lake County State's Attorney's Office
18 North County
Waukegan, IL 60085
(847) 377-3000
mburke@lakecountyil.gov

Nila R. Grahl
Local Council Coordinator
19th Judicial Circuit Family Violence
Coordinating Council
College of Lake County
19351 W. Washington - T316
Grayslake, IL 60030-1198
(847) 543.2315
ngraahl@clclllinois.edu

Liz Fales
*Coordinator of Professional and
Prevention Education*
A Safe Place / Lake County Crisis Center
2710 17th St.
Zion, IL 60099
(847) 731-7165
lfales@asafeplaceforhelp.org

Carrie Flanigan
Domestic Violence Coordinator
Lake County State's Attorney's Office
18 North County
Waukegan, IL 60085
(847) 377-3000
cflanigan@lakecountyil.gov

Claudia Kasten
Chief of Juvenile Division
Lake County State's Attorney's Office
24647 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Vernon Hills, IL 60061
(847) 377-7850
ckasten@lakecountyil.gov

Carrie Madson
Juvenile Victim / Witness Counselor
Lake County State's Attorney's Office
24647 N. Milwaukee Ave,
Vernon Hills, IL 60061
(847) 377-7824
cmadson@lakecountyil.gov

Arlene Messner-Peters, L.C.S.W.
Counseling Connections
31480 Highway 45
Libertyville, IL 60048
(847) 680-2715 x229
apeters@counselingconnections.net

Peggy Miller
Director, Judicial Services
College of Lake County
111 N. Genesee Street
Waukegan, IL 60085
(847) 543-2101
pcmiller@clclllinois.edu

Dawn Patch
Felony Domestic Violence Counselor
Lake County State's Attorney's Office
18 North County, 4th Floor
Waukegan, IL 60085
(847) 377-3000
dpatch@lakecountyil.gov

Jennifer Samartano
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois
(Lake, DuPage, McHenry, Kane & Kendall
Counties)
jsamartano@preventchildabuseillinois.org

Jill Verbrick
*Misdemeanor Domestic Violence
Counselor*
Lake County State's Attorney's Office
18 N. County St.
Waukegan, IL 60085
(847) 377-3000
jverbrick@lakecountyil.gov

Please distribute this information to parents and teachers